

Implementation Sub-Committee Of the Task Force on Federal Legislation Of the Children's Cabinet

Meeting Minutes

October 1, 2004

Linda Katz called the meeting to order in the Forand Building, Staff development conference room at 9:05AM. Introductions were made, and the minutes from the September 3rd meeting were reviewed, and approved, with one change to the last page.

The correction is that the Governor's Adult Literacy Task Force will be hiring a high-level adult literacy expert through the Rhode Island Department of Education.

Update on FIP Changes

Donalda Carlson advised the group that full family sanction policy has now been implemented effective mid-September with the closing of 116 FIP cases. A few of these sanctioned households have contacted field offices, but the exact number is unknown. A representative from the Northern region reported that two families have contacted her office, and there is a report that one family has contacted the Providence office. These families remain active on the Food Stamp Program and the Rite Care Program until their next

re-certification. Sherry Campanelli has asked Randy Rosati to track these cases using the same data that is tracked for other sanctioned cases. A suggestion was made to track employment and subsidized housing for this group. Alternative cash assistance will be implemented off-line. Copies of the draft forms to be used were passed out to the attendees for their review and comments. Families must be eligible for FIP, and meet the criteria for alternative cash assistance, and they have an option to accept the lump sum instead of ongoing FIP cash assistance. Families who choose this option will have a 72 hour time frame to change their mind and will be given a form which, if signed, will rescind the alternative cash assistance lump sum payment. The department expects to implement in late October or early November, after staff has been trained. A request was made that the CAP agencies be notified when implementation occurs. There was a discussion regarding the Food Stamp, Medical Assistance, Child Care Assistance, and child support enforcement implications for the families who choose Alternative cash assistance. Several members of the task force felt the draft forms should be reviewed by consumers before going to print. Brenda Dann-Messier, Executive Director of Dorcas Place, was asked to share these forms with students in her organization. After students and staff of Dorcas Place complete their review, the group was asked to submit their comments regarding the forms within one week, as the policy needs to be finalized soon.

General Update on DHS Staffing/Caseloads

Ed Sneesby reported that the FIP caseload is slowly declining, and is now approximately 13,400 active cases, and the larger offices have seen a smaller decline than the small offices. The Rite Care caseload remains very high, as well as the Food Stamp caseload as participation in that program has increased this year. Eligibility Technician vacancies have been filled, however, these workers are inexperienced, and most of them are in the Providence, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket offices. It takes about one year for an eligibility worker to become proficient at their job, and timeliness and the error rate have been impacted. Some overtime has been allowed for childcare staff, as their caseload remains very high. The department is attempting to balance the caseloads statewide, with Rite Care and NPA Food Stamps having the highest caseloads. There was some discussion regarding time limit cases, and social caseworker staffing levels. This topic will be discussed again at the next meeting.

Overview of New Services

Donalda Carlson announced that the RFP for supportive employment and transitional jobs is now at state purchasing, and the review process is complete. The department is still very committed to literacy programs, and a flow chart was handed out to define the assessment, testing, and employment plan process. More resources are being focused on the post 24 month, non-engaged families. Donalda also announced that the “red book” has been updated, and available to all DHS FIP social casework staff and is used as a referral guide.

Update CCRI Reach Program

Denise Szmczuk from CCRI updated the group with an overview of their services to FIP clients. There is a new initiative at CCRI to reach those students who are at risk of failure. All FIP recipients at CCRI meet with a Reach counselor. CCRI is now completing testing of FIP recipients in the local offices. The TABE (test of adult basic education) is now being given in the Newport and North Kingstown offices, and will be given in all of the offices soon. DHS field operations have issued a memo regarding the new testing process. DHS staff will be allowed to take the test themselves, so that they can better advise clients as to what they can expect from the test. The test results will be sent to vendors, and the results are valid for a one-year period. There was a discussion regarding the appropriateness of referring non-literate clients for testing. Denise handed Testing/Assessment overview out to the group, and she explained the career interest inventory that is part of the services given to FIP clients. She also gave the group some statistics regarding FIP recipients who have graduated from CCRI. She submits statistics to DHS at the end of every semester.

The Rite Works Job Retention Unit presentation is being postponed until the next meeting.

Simplified Reporting for Food Stamps

The report on simplified reporting was postponed until the next

meeting. Bob McDonough did announce to the group that there would be a public hearing at the DaVinci Center on October 6th, at 6PM.

The meeting adjourned at 11:05 AM. The next meeting will be held on November 5,2004.

Respectfully submitted:

Christine Unsworth